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# **EDWIN AND ALICIA:**

**OR, THE**

**INFANT MARTYRS.**



EDWIN AND ALICIA:

OR, THE

INFANT MARTYRS.

BY MISS S. SHERWOOD.

LONDON:

THOMAS WARD AND CO.

XXVII. PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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1834.

25434 . f. 5



**Harjette & Savill, Printers,  
107, St. Martin's Lane, Charing Cross.**

## EDWIN AND ALICIA.

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THE sun had long set behind the Cotswold hills, and all nature lay in darkness : it was the latter end of the year, and the rain was pouring in torrents from the heavens, and the wind was whistling amongst the scathed pines which surrounded and partially concealed a little cottage, where a feeble light, glimmering through the only window of a comfortless apartment, made it evident that the inhabitants had not yet retired to their rest from the fatigues of the day. Upon a miserable pallet, at one end of the room, reclined a figure, which, from the drapery, appeared to be a female ; but so thin and haggard was the coun-

tenance, that a stranger would have doubted whether or not the spirit had yet been released from the vile clay, to wing its way to mansions above. At some distance from the bed, and reading attentively, was seated a noble-looking boy, who could not have numbered more than thirteen summers; but though he seemed much interested in his book, from time to time he laid it down, and gazed long and mournfully on the dying female; at which times he would hastily wipe away the tears from his dark blue eyes, and try again to turn his attention to the sacred volume which lay before him. At length a deep sigh from the invalid aroused him, and he walked quietly to the side of the bed—the dying woman stirred—and, opening her eyes, she looked around her, and then faintly asked for water. The boy raised her gently on one arm, at the same time holding a cup to her parched lips. After taking a long draught of the cooling beverage, she re-

moved herself from the trembling arm which supported her, and addressed herself in a faint voice to the boy. "Edwin," she began, "I am dying, my child—you are about to lose your mother, beloved one—but do not grieve, my sweet boy, for my pilgrimage is now nearly at its termination, and I shall be made happy, through the merits of my Redeemer. Edwin dearest, when I am gone, remember your dying mother's last words—remember, my child, that you cannot stand in your own strength—you are weak and sinful—but your Saviour has died for you, and is able and willing to uphold and strengthen you through the dangers of this life. Yes," continued the dying woman, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven, "yes, I am convinced that, though I die now, and leave my child a Protestant, and one accounted an heretic in this unhappy land, yet that he will be preserved in the right way, and that the Father of the fatherless will be to him a guide

and support, even unto the end." Whilst she spoke, the boy had fallen on his knees beside the bed, and had completely concealed his face with his hands, and was sobbing violently, but as his mother ceased to speak, he raised his head, and, throwing back the clustering ringlets from his brow, he attempted to express his feelings by words, but for some time was unable. "Oh, my mother, my mother," he at length exclaimed, "you must not go—I cannot live without you—who will love and cherish me as my mother has done? Who will lead me to the knowledge of my Saviour, when my mother is no more? Oh, my God!" he added, "spare my beloved parent to me yet a little while, if it be thy will, or else take me with her from this *cruel, cruel* world." "Edwin! Edwin! beloved one, speak not so," said his mother. "No, Edwin dearest, you have still many friends left, and if it is God's will that you should remain behind me, does it become

you to murmur, or to call in question the Divine behests? Ah, no, my child; but it is in reminding you of these friends that I now wish to employ my dying breath—friends that must and will protect my child till happier times are restored to our lovely England, and until the protestant Elizabeth is granted to the prayers of the persecuted people: and now, my boy, place yourself near me, so that I may gaze on your sweet face, probably for the last time, and think I see the countenance of your beloved father once again in you.” As she spoke, the boy placed himself as directed, but he still retained her hand in his, and often, during the course of his mother’s narrative, he bowed his head upon that pale thin hand, and, as he pressed it to his lips, his burning tears fell in large drops upon it. “ My child,” said the dying woman, “ although you have always been accustomed to a peasant’s life, it has not been so with your mother, who was brought up in the

court of Henry the Eighth, and was nearly allied to the unfortunate Anna Boleyn, the mother of the Lady Elizabeth. In consequence of our near connexion with the royal family," continued she, "we were for some time in high favour at court, particularly with all those who paid attention to the beautiful wife of the fickle monarch. It was in compliment to our royal relation that my family at first abjured Popery; but I trust that, through the blessing of God, the afflictions with which we have been since visited, have been made, through Divine mercy, the rod of correction to bring us to our Saviour, in heart as well as in mere profession. My mother had only one sister, viz., the Lady Clara, who, marrying early, died at the period of the birth of her first child. Hence, my cousin Matilda, being left motherless in her cradle, was adopted by her aunt, and made my companion during those years of infancy of which memory leaves no record. Nor was she removed

from under my father's roof till she was brought out by her ambitious father, in the full bloom and perfection of her beauty, to win for herself an establishment amongst the nobles of the court. Thus, my cousin and myself were brought up together as twin sisters—we were as tender blossoms, drawing their nourishment from one parent stem, happy in the simplicity of the life we led at my father's country-house, and having no anticipation of those events which have since forced us into such far-removed walks in life. But the days of happy childhood being past, the period of the trial of many in this kingdom drew near. Since the beheading of the misguided Anna Boleyn, all who were connected with her had gradually lost their consequence in society, although my father's family was permitted to remain awhile without feeling the evil effects of the loss of royal favour. My father and mother, however, continued to live in retirement some time after I was

grown up ; but, as I said before, my cousin Matilda's father would not permit her to remain in the same obscurity after her education was supposed to be finished ; but, taking her to court, her singular beauty and vast pretensions soon obtained for her a number of noble suitors, who becoming troublesome, her father, in order to put an end to their various solicitations, commanded her to prepare to marry the Baron de Courcy without delay, having chosen this nobleman in preference to all his rivals, on account of his being not only the richest of her suitors, but the one best approved by his Majesty.

“ My beloved cousin for some time strenuously resisted her father's will, and on this plea, that the religious sentiments of the Baron did not agree with those in which she had been brought up, but she eventually gave way ; and what was the consequence of this weakness but what might be expected ? from the period of her marriage she

became at least a nominal Papist ; and, as you know, Edwin, has consented to have her children educated in the way of error.

“ But how different has my lot been,” continued the dying lady, “ to the splendid fortune of the Lady de Courcy. I have at times been wicked enough to think that Providence dealt hardly with me, in strewing my path through life with rankling thorns, whilst that of Matilda was sprinkled with roses ; but now, at this solemn hour, how differently do I behold these things, and how thankful am I for the light afflictions which endured but a moment. During the same year in which my cousin was married, my parents gave my hand to the young Lord de Lacy, a nobleman whose estates lay in the neighbourhood of my father’s domains. My beloved husband thought as I did upon religion ; and it was at a period in which such as held these opinions were suspected, and had little favour at court, though

that court pretended to be Protestant. Your father, my Edwin, your noble father had enemies: he was implicated in some act of treason, in which he had no other connection than being nearly related to the real or pretended conspirators; but he had fallen under suspicion—this was enough at that period—and it would be enough at present to bring the loftiest head in England to the scaffold. It was not long after your birth, and before there was time for my second infant to see the light, that we were torn asunder.

“Never, never shall I forget that scene of woe. I knew he was innocent—I knew that he was unjustly accused—and yet, alas! I had no hope. He was torn from my arms in the court of our castle—I fell insensible on the pavement, to revive again only to long scenes of woe. King Henry the Eighth was of a capricious and unrelenting temper; he governed our island as a

Turkish sultan, rather than as a Christian king. My beloved husband, therefore, having incurred the resentment of this tyrant, was arrested and confined in the Tower, charged with treason; nor did he ever leave his prison, but to ascend that scaffold which was, through Divine mercy, made his first step to immortal happiness. But my beloved husband failed not in the hour of trial—he was made strong in the strength of his Lord—and he died praying for his murderers, and blessing his wife and children.

“ But oh, my husband! my husband!” added the dying lady, “ I grieve not now, beloved one, for thy early death and dreadful sufferings; thou art at rest with the child thou wast never doomed to behold on earth; and a little while—yes, a very little while—and thy wife—the wife of thy bosom will be with thee, where she will behold the King in his beauty, in the land which is very far off.” Here the lady paused for breath, whilst

one tear, the last she ever shed, trickled down her sunken cheek ; and then continued—

“ It was in the latter end of Henry’s reign in which I lost my husband ; and by the same act by which he was condemned for treason, his estates were forfeited to the crown. We had hoped, had it pleased God to have preserved the life of the royal Edward, to have obtained a reversion of the decree ; but whilst our prince was a minor, we were advised not to attempt it, having a powerful enemy in the Protector. On the accession of Mary, the forfeited lands were transferred to the Monks of St. Cuthbert, whose monastery, as you well know, my son, lies contiguous to the domain of the De Courcy’s. And now, my Edwin, it would seem that you are farther removed than ever from the rights of your ancestors ; yet all, I know, is well.

“ But oh ! my darling child—my orphan Edwin,” continued the lady, “ many and sad are

the trials which I apprehend for thee. Great and merciful God, still protect my boy ; and may his life below be for thy glory and praise, until he joins his beloved parents and sister, in that haven which our blessed Saviour's death has provided for the weary travellers, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest ! But, my boy," she continued, " I must hasten to the end of my history, for I hear that warning voice which says, ' Behold, I come quickly.' Yea, come blessed Lord—art thou not welcome ? and yet, my Edwin, I would tell thee more." The dying lady then having breathed with pain for some moments, took up her narrative with more composure—

" When apprised by a faithful friend that there were commissioners appointed by the King to come down speedily to take possession of the castle, and probably also of the person of my son, I consulted an old and faithful servant of the family ; and my father and mother being

dead, I fled secretly and in disguise to the house of the Lord de Courcy, where, being received by my cousin, she placed me, with my old servant, and you, my boy, in a lodge, on the edge of a pool among the woods, in the centre of the park—a place which once had been for the keeper of my Lord's falcons, but which had of late been deserted for one nearer the castle; and there, having secretly provided me with all things necessary, I became a mother for the second time; and, as my little one but saw the light and died, my cousin, the Lady de Courcy, who was seeking a nurse for her little daughter, the Lady Alicia, then only a few months old, joyfully consigned the sweet babe to my care, and thus I was comforted, in my bereaved state; whilst in the humble garb of a peasant, was never, I believe, thought to be more, by the servants of the castle, than what I appeared to be; and Matilda, who left her precious babe with me many months

after I had weaned it, never wanted an excuse for visiting me often, and shewing me extraordinary favour. As to my Lord, I never could understand whether he recognised me or not: he had not, it is true, seen me more than once before I came in affliction to the lodge. Nevertheless, I believe that he feigned ignorance, thinking that, should I ever be traced to my solitary refuge by an enemy, it might be as well for him to have it to say, that he knew me as no other than a peasant, and the foster-mother of his daughter.

“ My Edwin, you remember nothing before you found yourself living in that solitary abode beside the lake. When the little Lady Alicia was a smiling and lovely infant in my arms, were you not happy then, my boy? and were you not happy as child could be, dwelling with me and old Bertrand in that retirement? Till within the few last months, could aught that the world could have given, or pomp and pageantry, and lofty

titles, and praise of men, have added to that happiness, my son ? You answer, No. Well remember this, my boy, that happiness is not a thing which feeds on earthly aliments—its food, my Edwin, is celestial. Oh ! sell it not, my son, for aught which man can proffer.

“ And now, Edwin dearest, when I am no more, return to the Lady de Courcy’s ; there you will find Philip, the son of the good old Bertrand, who is dead, you know, since we came here ; he will be kind to you ; and the worthy *gouvernante* of the little lady loves you, and will do what in her lies to protect you ; and I doubt not but that the Lady de Courcy will provide some situation for you, where you will be safe from the interference of those who are building up the apostate church in this unhappy kingdom with fire and with blood : and though I have now told you, my son, what I never told you before, that you are the son of an unfortunate nobleman, and

the lawful inheritor of many a fair and fertile acre, and that you are not what you thought yourself, a simple peasant, the son of poor dependants and serfs on the lands of De Courcy, yet I beseech you, child of my heart, that you will still hold fast, with the Divine blessing, that simplicity and that humility which becometh creatures who have nothing which they have not received. Hitherto, my son, you have heard me addressed by the name of Elspeth, to which some, in courtesy, have added the title of Dame, but my real name is Berrengaria, and my father was of the ancient Norman family of Joyeux, the name and title of which are now both extinct—so pass the honours and the titles given by man—not so the honours which are from above: but enough of all reference to earthly things.

“ Now, Edwin dearest, bring me that blessed Bible, and promise me that you will do your best, with God’s assistance, to teach your foster-

sister what that sacred book contains; for her mother, alas! has departed from the faith in which she was educated, and adopted her husband's creed. When I am gone you will shew her your mother's Bible. Tell her it was a comfort to that dying mother in her last moments, and enabled her to leave her orphan boy with joy, and full assurance of his safety; for she trusted to the Rock of Ages; and never has that Rock been known to fail."

As the lady finished her story her head sunk back on her pillow, and, closing her eyes, she remained for some time motionless. The weeping Edwin stood beside her, still holding in his hand the Bible, her last gift. At length he fancied her lips moved again, and, bending towards her, she murmured faintly, "Edwin, beloved one! love your sister, and remind her of what your mother taught you, when you were both happy children, in her cottage. Edwin—dear boy—farewell—

Blessed Saviour—I come ;” and then one long, deep sigh told that all was over, and that the redeemed soul was free, and winging its way to meet that precious Saviour, and those dear friends so loved on earth, in realms of glory unchangeable.

For some time poor Edwin remained motionless beside the remains of his mother ; and then, as if all the horrors of the scene had suddenly burst upon his apprehension, he pressed his lips upon the forehead of that beloved parent, now no more in life, calling upon her, by all those endearing epithets which he had never before pronounced without drawing forth the strongest expressions of maternal love. “ Oh, my mother, my mother,” he exclaimed ; “ bless your boy—speak to him once again ! Look at your child—your own Edwin. Alas ! I cannot, cannot live, when parted from you !” But the voice of the only child of a murdered father was no more to awaken the ear of the mother—those

rigid features were to smile no more on Edwin; and the unhappy boy, having for an instant contemplated the stiffening features, fell with his face upon the bed, and for some time found relief in total insensibility—for his mind and his feelings were overcharged—not that he had heard his father's history that day for the first time, for could old Bertram have tended him for so many years, without giving the noble boy a hint that he was something more than what his mother's apparent condition would have suggested? but never before had he seen the work of death; and deeply awful and solemn were the circumstances in which he first witnessed it—he fell, as we have already said, with his face on the bed, and lay, it was not known how long—when the door of the cottage was gently opened, and two men entered: they had been knocking for some time, but finding that no attention had been paid to them, they advanced into the apartment. The candle had

gone out, and only the faint glimmering of the embers on the hearth prevented the darkness from being total. One of the men having lighted a lantern which he had taken from under his cloak, he held it up in his hand and gazed around him. "Well, Philip," he at length exclaimed to his companion, "this is indeed a wretched place for the nurse of our little Lady Alicia and her foster-brother to harbour in; but I suspect that the good Catharine has not been correct in her account, for she told us her mistress was very ill, and wanted immediate assistance."

"Old Catharine may be right, after all," answered the man who was designated by his companion by the name of Philip, and, as he spoke, he moved towards the bed, and gently removed the boy from the corpse. "Alas!" he added sorrowfully, "we are too late, Godfrey; the good woman is no more; and our lady will be angry with us for not being here sooner; but now

no time must be lost, we had better remove the boy, and old Catharine will soon return to straighten these poor limbs, and prepare them for those last observances, which we must perform secretly, as she who is no more having been a heretic, we must put her out of the way as quietly as we can, hoping that she will be none the worse for the want of what a minister ought to do for her."

" It will be an ugly job," replied Philip, " to put away this poor corpse in haste and secrecy, just for all the world as the murderer hides his victim ; but, as our lady says, for the sake of the boy, we must do nothing to draw the world's eyes upon us."

" Poor child," said the first speaker, " how pale he looks ; it would be cruelty to revive him from his fainting till we can place him under proper hands, and away from the sight of his mother's body. I think, Philip, you shall re-

move him immediately to the castle. I do not fear to be left alone with this poor corpse, as our purposes towards the child are all of the best kind ; indeed I would not hurt a single hair of his head, though I am afraid, poor boy, there are some that could not say the same. It appears to me, Philip, that the boy and his mother are not what they have seemed to be ; for if they had been no more than peasants, like ourselves, what was the need of moving them, in such hurry and secrecy, from the lodge in the park to this dreary place, and nobody to be trusted with the secret but you and me, Philip, and old Catharine, the tenant of this cot ? and then, the orders so strictly given by our lady this afternoon, when Catharine came to say how ill poor Elspeth was ; the strict orders, I say, to be swift and secret, and in case that all should be over when we came, the care we were to have in bringing away the boy. I say, Philip, I am mistaken if this boy, now lying

there as insensible as the poor corpse beside him, is altogether as much of a peasant as my lady would have me think. Now tell me, Philip, is it as I suspect?"

"Peace," said Philip; "perhaps another time I may tell you more, Godfrey; it is enough now to say, that not even his youth and harmlessness would save him, poor lamb, if once the history of his origin, and of the faith in which he has been reared, was known to our bloody Queen."

"Bloody Queen, indeed," repeated Godfrey, in an inward tone, "hist, you fool—didst never hear that the spirits of the wilds hold converse with the monks, and tell to them all that is said, even in the most secret places, by them they count accursed?"

"True," returned Philip; "and here we are talking, whilst there is more work to be done than will be well finished before cock-crow: one of us must be away forthwith with the boy, whilst

the other must look for a spade to turn up this clay, for we are to bury the body in the hut."

"Do you take the boy before you on the horse, Philip, to the castle," replied Godfrey, "whilst I, with Catharine, who will be here presently, will finish the other job."

"Be it so," said Philip; "but see you, the boy has a book in his hand—this must be taken care of—I know the volume—I must conceal it about me—no doubt it was the poor mother's last gift—it would be hard that the youth should miss it—see how his poor hand clasps it even in his fainting fit, poor orphan boy—but he moves; I will hasten away, therefore, that he may not behold his mother again—it were better he should see the poor body no more."

As Philip spoke, he took the boy in his arms, and, covering him with his cloak, as a mother would cover a beloved child, he bore him out of the cottage, and soon the clatter of his horse's

hoofs were heard dying away in the distance. I do not here intend to enlarge on the feelings of the young man who was left by Philip, at the dead of night, in a solitary cottage, with no other companion than a breathless body, nor to speak of his pleasure in seeing Catharine return, accompanied by another person who might be trusted. This Catharine was the inhabitant of the solitary abode to which the Lady de Courcy had sent her cousin, under the apprehension that the vigilant pursuit which was now being made of persons suspected of heresy, might in some way or other lead to the discovery of the poor afflicted lady, whom she had hitherto protected under a false name within her own domains. Catharine had been a servant of the family, and was secretly a Protestant; and the extreme solitude of her cabin rendered her roof the safest asylum for the unhappy widow and her child. Catharine was not young, and when sent to the castle to inform the

Lady de Courcy of her mistress's illness, the faithful servant, what between grief and fatigue, had been so long delayed in performing her errand, that before her return the sufferer was no more. The last sad rites having been hastily performed to the noble lady, Berengaria de Lacy, they all left the cottage and returned to the castle, where I shall leave them, to speak of the bereaved orphan, who, having been brought up carefully by the tenderest of parents, had not yet felt so much as might have been anticipated from the loss of a father, or the sad change in the fortune of his family. He loved his mother tenderly,—there was a touching sadness in her manner that won upon the heart of her child; and even in his infant days the gentle boy would, at any time, leave his childish sports to comfort and amuse his beloved parent: his early days, therefore, had not been unhappy—neither had he been without his pleasures, for his foster-sister, as he

called her, the little Lady Alicia; even after she had ceased to reside at the lodge, would often obtain permission to come with her *gouvernante*, and spend whole days with her mother, Elspeth, and her brother, Edwin, as she was accustomed to call them. It was evident that the Lady de Courcy encouraged her child's affection for her cousin; and often sent presents by her hand to the cottage, though she herself dared not so often to visit it, fearful of some of the immediate attendants discovering her secret, though the lines of sorrow traced on her features, together with the change of dress, might have deceived those who had known the recluse as the Lady Berengaria de Lacy.

It was now in the capacity of page to her daughter, that the Lady de Courcy had ventured to send for the boy to the castle, trusting, in case of any discovery, to the influence of her lord at Court, and to her great interest with the Queen, as the

wife of a powerful Roman Catholic nobleman; nor was she without her secret hope that, as the age of the youth was so tender, it might not be impossible to lead him to relinquish the principles in which he had been brought up; and in that case she did not doubt but that her husband would have influence to recover for him his paternal honours and estates; and then what should hinder but that his foster-sister should share those honours with him? and thus she permitted her imagination to wander into future scenes, not calculating the many contingences on which her hopes were fabricated.

The castle of De Courcy was not many miles distant from the cottage on the dreary hills, nor did Edwin recover his recollection, excepting only as it were at intervals, till placed on a bed in an upper apartment of the castle. When restored from the fainting fit into which he had fallen on his mother's remains, he continued some hours in

a stupid listless condition ; whilst nothing appeared to have power to arouse him, he lay motionless, with his hands clasped and his eyes closed, but no tears relieved his bursting heart. Lady de Courcy, to whom the sudden death of her beloved cousin had been a terrible blow, and the more so, because she could not but sometimes blame herself for not having had the courage to suffer persecution in the same manner as Lady Berrengaria had done, for the faith in which they had both been educated, availed herself of the habit of those days to give her personal attendance beside the couch of one who appeared only to be the child of her servant ; but still finding that the boy remained in a state of insensibility or stupor, as if the stroke had been too severe for his tender frame, and fearing that, when he revived, he might express something which she wished to be concealed, she directed the servants to leave the apartment, and ordered that her

daughter's *gouvernante* might be called, knowing her to be well skilled in medical lore. The good woman obeyed the summons, and the Lady Alicia having heard that the sick person was her foster-brother, stole in after her attendant, and appeared at the foot of his couch, by the side of her *gouvernante*.

I wish it were in my power to bring before my readers the vast apartment where the chief characters of my story were at that time assembled. The noble boy reclining on his couch—his fair hair nearly concealing his fine countenance—his dark eyes closed, and their long lashes resting on his sweet pale cheek, giving to the expression an appearance of deep sadness. Beside him could be seen the still graceful figure of the Lady de Courcy, bending, with all a mother's affection, over the beautiful boy, and watching every movement of his with trembling eagerness. At the foot of the couch stood the

young Alicia—her auburn ringlets falling in clustering curls over her neck and shoulders, whilst the unusual expression of deep sorrow in her soft mild eye, the trembling of her ruby lip, and the bright blush that suddenly mounted to her fair cheek, all spoke but too plainly of her great interest in the scene before her; nor was any one there present surprised, when, at the moment in which a bright stream of morning light fell full upon the face of the noble boy, the gentle little lady burst into tears, and, drawing nearer to the couch, she called upon her cousin by all those endearing names she had been accustomed to use to him in his mother's cottage, and during her infant years.

“Edwin—dear, dear Edwin,” she exclaimed, “my own brother, look at your sister—your little sister, Alicia. Oh, Edwin dear! I cannot bear to see you thus—do speak to me, and tell me that you are only trying to frighten me.” Then

turning to her mother, who was standing weeping beside her—"He does not hear me, Madam," she said, "Edwin cannot hear me—what makes him look so *very* *very* sad? Oh! poor Edwin, how I wish that my dear nurse were here to comfort my darling Edwin—my own brother."

The sound of that soft infant voice was not without its effect on the afflicted orphan—starting, as if from a long and terrible dream, he opened his eyes and looked about him. Whilst a thousand old remembrances rushed upon his mind, he saw, in imagination, the cottage by the lake, and the whole surrounding scene was present with him; he remembered when his beloved mother had placed the dimpled hand of the infant Alicia within his own, and caused him to promise, ere yet he had known to what such promises should tend, to serve and love her, in ~~weak~~ and woe, unto the end of life, as brothers love and serve their sisters; and also how, as

years advanced, she had pressed on him the duty of endeavouring, whenever opportunity might serve, to impress the mind of that little lady with those holy truths which he had happily imbibed from early infancy: he remembered, too, how, whilst yet himself but a little one, he had often stood and looked on Alicia whilst she slept, and thought that, in the whole world, there could not be another so beautiful, so lovely as that gentle babe.

Could it be wondered at, then, that the sound of this his adopted sister's voice, should have had power to awaken him first from the stupor of grief? He turned and looked at Alicia, and, whilst his eye still rested on her, a shower of tears came to his relief. This was more than the Lady de Courcy could behold without being forcibly affected; and, fearful of shewing, by the traces of her tears, too much interest towards the foster-brother of her little girl, she hastily left the apartment, desiring that the *gouvernante* would take

care that every thing might be done for the comfort and restoration of the poor boy, and leaving her daughter behind her, through haste and agitation. The little lady being thus forgotten, approached still nearer the couch, and set herself to inquire the cause of all that she had seen.

“ Why do you weep, dear Edwin ?” she said—“ you are now come to live in the castle, and I shall see you every day. My mother told me but a little while since, that you were to be my page, and to follow me whenever I go abroad ; and shall we not be happy together ?” And she placed her little hand in his, and added, “ my nurse shall come, too, and we shall enjoy ourselves so very much : you shall feed my beautiful little merlin, and teach it to pursue the heron, when it is strong enough to fly. You shall go with me when I ride in the park, and you shall have a palfrey as graceful as my own. The greyhound, which the Abbé brought me from Rome, shall

follow us wherever we go; and we will be happy together again, in the presence of my beloved nurse."

"Ah, lady," said the sorrowful boy, bursting afresh into tears at the mention of his mother; "I do not think I shall ever be happy again, now I am separated from my dear, dear mother; she has left me and you, sweet lady, to pass away to another land, and I have no one now to love me."

"Do not say so, dear Edwin," returned the little lady, smiling affectionately; "I will love you, and my mother will love you, and my dear nurse will soon come back again."

It was some time before the orphan could make Alicia understand how he had lost his mother, for the high-born damsel having been bred up in pomp and luxury, as yet knew little of that event which must equally befall the lowly peasant and his noble lord; but when she

once was made to comprehend that she had seen her beloved nurse for the last time, she covered her face with her dimpled hands, and wept for some time without ceasing. The tears of the little girl seemed to be peculiarly soothing to poor Edwin ; he could not see the gentle child weeping for her dear nurse without trying to console her—it softened his own sorrows to see them partaken by another, and reminded him of what his mother had often told him—viz., that there is One on high, who once sustained human flesh, ready to comfort the mourner, and to weep with those that weep.

“ It is wrong to grieve so much, dear lady,” he at length said ; “ for my mother is happy now —she is gone to heaven—to that blessed place of which she used to speak to us when you were a lisping infant in our cottage, and she will never be unhappy again—no, never—and it is wrong, very wrong, to wish her back with us again. But will you let me read to you,” he added,

“ out of this precious book ?” and as he spoke he lifted up the Bible, which Philip had carefully laid by his hand upon the couch. “ My dear mother desired me to talk to you often of our pleasant infant days ; and if you would let me read to you sometimes, it would make me very happy, at least,” he continued, with a deep sigh, “ as happy as I can be, now that I have lost my own darling mother.”

It might be asked, how the *gouvernante* could have allowed all this to pass without interference ; but this worthy person (who was the daughter of one of those who had been burnt at Coventry as a Lollard some years before,) was in fact a protestant, though secretly such, on account of the horrors of those times ; in consequence of which she favoured Edwin in every opportunity, of which he availed himself, and they were many, to instruct Alicia in the everlasting truths which are revealed in Scripture ; at the same time that she,

with a mixture of motives too common even with those whom we may believe to be children of God, affected not to understand what was going forward, in order that she might be provided with an excuse, should her conduct ever be called in question ; and thus, in this first instance, she permitted Edwin to say what he would to the little lady, who sat by his couch, being careful only to watch that no one should come in hastily to overhear what might be said.

Thus this foster-brother and sister consoled each other ; and, whilst the little lady listened with wonder and admiration to the soft and gentle pleadings of Edwin, who was repeating to her many things which his mother had taught him respecting the happiness of the redeemed, and the glories of a future world, he had risen from his couch, and was holding her hand, and, looking down upon her sweet face, not as her haughty brothers were wont to do, but as one whose affec-

tions had been strengthened and sanctified through the operations of a Spirit not known nor understood by the world.

Within a few days from that period, the boy was duly settled in the place of my little lady's page; having his lodging by night in a small chamber of a turret, and his place during the day being in the large ante-chamber of my Lady de Courcy and her daughter's apartments, where he might amuse himself as he listed, either with a book or with his pen or pencil, it mattered not, so that he was at hand to obey the call of the silver whistle, which lay upon his lady's table. It must be confessed, that the bondage he endured was not an iron one, and that his lady's behests were none of the hardest; nor must it be concealed, that he was far from being disconcerted when he first appeared in the presence of his mistress, in his page's garb, which, according to the fashion of those times, was of green cloth,

the seams whereof were laid down with threads of silver : he wore therewith a velvet cap, with his lord's badge perked therein, in the form of the spur and the feather of the game cock ; moreover, he wore a belt with a small dirk, and embroidered hose fitting tight to his legs ; and, truly, there was not then, in all the realm, a comelier page than was that of the little *Lady de Courcy*. It was a time of prosperity to *Edwin*, such as he had not hitherto conceived, and a time, too, of danger, from the example of many of the other pages, and well-fed serving-men of the household ; but there was a hand from above extended over the orphan, to protect him and to keep his feet from falling, and to hold him back from departing from those simple and holy habits which he had contracted, through the Divine mercy, in his mother's cottage ; for, as I would remark in this place, simplicity and holy living do not necessarily appertain unto the peasant's life more than

to that of the prince ; holiness and faith, and love, and all charitable and pious feelings, proceed from God to man—they are free gifts from on high—they cannot be acquired by instruction—they cannot be given by man, or human teacher ; when not divinely kept alive, they do assuredly languish, and seem to die away ; but when the Almighty willeth that they shall burn brightly in any soul, it is not many waters that can quench them.

But inasmuch as this season of sunshine did not tend, by the Divine favour, to weaken or corrupt the mind of Edwin, it proved to his little lady a very blessed period ; for there was not a day which passed that the young page did not follow the Lady Alicia and her *gouvernante* in their walks or rides ; they loved best, however, to walk, because then they visited their old haunts around the solitary deserted cottage, and renewed many of their ancient sports—for were they not

still little ones ? and there one passing that way might have seen the page and his lady sitting on the margin of the lake with the *gouvernante*—the little one being busy in weaving baskets of sedges, whilst the page read aloud to her from the holy volume, choosing those parts which spoke more directly of the words and actions of our blessed Saviour when on earth.

In the meantime, the Lord de Courcy and his sons were absent ; being abroad with Philip of Spain, the husband of Queen Mary ; and there was also another person absent, whose presence was perhaps more felt in the castle than that of the Lord himself, and this was the confessor—viz., Father Ambrose, a monk of St. Cuthbert, who had gone up to London on some especial business, and been detained there some weeks instead of some days, as he had at first expected. If Lady de Courcy had not the courage to acknowledge herself a protestant, she

was a papist only in outward form ; hence, whenever the confessor was abroad, she had been in the habit of letting all the usual religious forms observed in the household pass unregarded—glad of the opportunity of being relieved from services which to her were entirely heartless : on this account, since Edwin had come to the castle, his non-attendance at mass had not been remarked ; but the father had scarcely made his appearance before his eye fell upon the page.

It is not the way with persons of this description to speak before they have well considered a subject ; however, when the matins and vespers had been duly performed several days in the chapel of the castle, and it was seen that Edwin was not required to attend, the father took occasion to say to the Lady de Courcy, that he wondered how it was that the little lady's page should be permitted thus to neglect the observances due to holy mother church.

“ He is the son, I understand,” said he, “ of the person who formerly inhabited the lodge on the lake. Let me tell you, lady, that I had my suspicions of that person—I cannot but doubt that she was strongly tainted with heresy ; and had she not left the domain at the time she did, I should certainly have made it my business, as a faithful servant of God, to have looked into this matter ; but when the evil is brought from without into the very heart of the household, surely it becomes us to be awake to the danger. Have you any reason, lady,” he added, “ to suppose that this boy is actually a heretic ?”

The lady was alarmed ; and as she had ever done, when pressed by fear in cases of this kind, prevaricated, and answered by a question—to wit—what he would recommend should be done, in case his suspicions respecting the boy should have any foundation ?

“ Let him be amused,” replied the father,

pompously ; “ let him also be encouraged to amuse himself ; he is still but a child, and one who, if I mistake not, has his full share of childish folly : if nothing is said to him, he will soon lose sight of any of those heretical doctrines which may have been instilled into his mind, having none here to uphold him in his errors. I have known many, lady, who have been converted by these means ; but at present we must beware of entering into controversy with him ; for, infant as he is, the devil, in the present day, has so great power, that he has lately put such sophistries into the mouths of babes and fools as have confounded even some of our deepest divines ; but he must be admonished to be present at mass, in attendance upon his little lady ; the service is very impressive, and we must watch its effect on the youth ; and then, when we find his better feelings excited by our solemn services, then will be the time to instil the principles of

our holy church upon his young mind ; and, if we succeed, there will be a soul snatched as a brand from the burning, and our reward will be great. For is it not written that, ‘ whosoever will give to one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall have his reward’ ? The blessing of our lady and the church be upon you, daughter.” So saying, the father having crossed himself repeatedly, drew his cowl over his head and walked out of the apartment. Agreeably to the wish of Father Ambrose, the unsuspecting Edwin was directed to follow his little lady to the chapel, on the evening of the very day of this conversation.

Edwin had never been present at a Roman catholic service, and being taken by surprise, for he hardly knew how far he might comply with this order without wounding his conscience, he thought it best first to ascertain the nature of these services, before he took the important and dan-

gerous step of acknowledging himself a protestant: he therefore followed his little lady along the vaulted gallery which led to the chapel, but with an air so constrained, that she could not fail of observing it; and, thinking that he only wanted some such little encouragement as she could give him, she turned, and thus addressed him:—"We are going, Edwin," she said, "to shew you how we worship our God; we go twice every day to the chapel, now Father Ambrose is returned, and he prays for us in Latin, and we must kneel and listen, and worship the Virgin. Never mind, Edwin," she added, seeing that her page was inclined to turn back; "I can tell you what you must do—you shall look at me, and do the same as I do. I shall have to cross myself in this way," she continued, suddenly making a sign of the cross; "and then I know the moment when we are to kneel down, and when we are to stand up; so, dear Edwin, stand quite close behind me,

and I can tell you how to behave, so that no one will know that you have never been in a chapel before."

" I am not afraid of appearing ignorant, dear lady," he answered ; " but you spoke of worshiping the Virgin ; now, the Bible says, that we should only worship God ; therefore, if you will allow me, I should prefer praying in my own apartment : I have not been used to pray when many persons are looking at me. My dear mother used always to leave me alone when I prayed."

" Nay, but Edwin," replied Alicia, " we should pray alone, and pray in company, so Father Ambrose says, and you shall follow me ; are you not my own page, Edwin, and did you not say you loved to follow me ? come, for once, I will order, and you shall obey ;" and the little lady passed on to her place in the chapel, whilst Edwin followed, but he stepped as one entering

on forbidden ground. When Alicia entered the presence of the assembled household, she walked slowly forward, with her eyes bent on the pavement, as she had been taught to do, thus giving leisure to the anxious Edwin to examine the various embellishments of the chapel. It was a lofty apartment in the Gothic style ; its windows were filled with painted glass from Italy, and it would have been most beautiful, had it not been rendered tawdry by the various idolatrous figures and emblems with which the walls were covered. Alicia had entered by a side door, and immediately advanced towards the chief altar, before which the principal members of the family were seated close without the rails ; the officiating functionaries were already at their stations, the leader of whom was the Father Ambrose, who had recommended so decidedly the attendance of the gentle Edwin at the mass. Over the altarpiece was a representation of our Saviour at the

last Supper, by one of the old masters ; and as the boy looked at it, and remarked the tender yet melancholy cast of our Lord's countenance, he thought of his mother and her dying words ; then raising his eyes towards heaven, he prayed for strength from above, that he might do what was right, and still continue to serve his Saviour, as his beloved parent had taught him from the holy Scriptures. During this interval the service had already commenced ; and the Lady Alicia had been well pleased, whilst mechanically telling her beads, in seeing that Edwin had no objection to kneel down, but she found it more difficult to make him understand when he was to cross himself, when to bow, and to perform all those other little acts which a good catholic so well knows is quite necessary, whenever a certain little bell is rung by one of those unfortunate children who are educated from infancy with the idea that they are chosen by

God to be spiritual guides to their fellow-creatures, and, through their pious mediation, lead them through death and purgatory to heaven, wholly forgetting that they themselves are as great sinners as those they would save ; but, as I said before, the little girl, looking back to her page, continued to whisper her admonitions to this effect :—“ Now bow, Edwin, that is the host, and cross yourself as I do.” But, instead of the boy following her directions, he stood quite still ; and, when she repeated her words in a more commanding way, he replied—“ Dear lady, do not ask me to do these things, for I cannot obey you—I am sure it would be wrong.” It was not to be supposed that the child understood what Edwin meant ; but, as she saw that the tears were in his eyes, she reproached herself for being unkind to him. She, therefore, turned towards him, and, placing her baby hand in his, she looked up smilingly in his face ; then, in a

moment, again she prepared to watch the priest as he shook the censer in the air, the perfume and smoke of which, as it rose up in clouds to the ceiling, were meant to represent the prayers and good works of the saints ascending up to heaven, even to the throne of God our Father—an emblem artfully derived from the holy Scriptures themselves. The service of the mass being concluded, Father Ambrose mounted the pulpit, for it was a high day, and entered into a long discourse on the perfectibility of the Roman catholic church, declaring that none without the pale of that holy church could ever hope for salvation. The church of Rome, he asserted, had come down to the present time through the prophets and apostles of old, and it was permitted unto the sons of that church to cause blessings to descend upon those whom they blessed, and curses upon those whom they cursed. This church," continued he, "was established by our

Lord when he abolished the synagogue of the Jews. It is called catholic, because it is universal ; and apostolic, because it proceeded from the preaching of the apostles. It is called Roman, because its chief has his seat in Rome. Christ is the invisible Head of this mystical body, and its visible chief is the pope, and its members are all the faithful Christians. The Holy Spirit animates this mystical body, therefore the church cannot err. Those, therefore, who are not of the church are in error, and, in consequence, are not in the way of salvation. No one can be saved who is not in the church any more than any one was saved who, during the Deluge, was not in the ark."\* "Woe be, therefore," continued the preacher, "to all pagans, idolators, heretics, and schismatics. What remains for such but everlasting burnings?" The father then enlarged on his own conceptions of the torments of the damned,

\* *Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites.*

and poor Edwin felt that his eye fell upon him more than once. However he concluded his discourse more calmly, and terminated it by directing that each member of the congregation should come to him during the ensuing week for confession, when, as he said, he should have leisure to address each one separately on their own particular case.

Thus the service closed ; but Edwin was not mistaken when he had thought that the eye of the father had often fallen on him whilst he was in the chapel ; nor was he aware that his conduct had so inflamed the monk that, notwithstanding the advice he had himself given to the lady, not to enter into an open contest with the boy, he was wholly incapable of waiting the effect of milder measures. He had observed what had passed between the children ; and he had also remarked that the boy never crossed himself, appearing neither to reverence the holy things shewn to the

believing Roman catholics, or to be convinced in the least by the sermon, which had been addressed particularly to his state, though Father Ambrose himself had thought it was a discourse which had reason enough in it to convert even one of those unhappy hardened beings from the other world. He had expected to see the boy, before his departure from the chapel, kneel with awe before the sacred altar, and implore, with tears, his spiritual father's advice and protection for the dreadful sins he had committed ever since he could rememher. The father already had made up, in his own mind, the words of comfort which he would say to the boy, and what penance he should enjoin for a sin not done wilfully, but through ignorance; but nothing of this sort had occurred, for, although the tears had arisen in the dark blue eyes of Edwin, and a sad—very, very sad expression had, for a time, shed itself over his beautiful countenance, these tokens of grief

had soon disappeared, and the sun had shone out lovely and more bright from the clouds that had just before hid it from sight. Father Ambrose was not naturally more cruel than other men; but he had suffered persecution in the reign of Henry the Eighth, and of his pious son, Edward, which persecutions had inflamed his papal zeal to such an extent, that he thought he did God service by every torment he could inflict on those he called heretics. "And now," said the father to himself as he left the chapel, "If such a boy as this is able to resist the influences of our holy and infallible church, we shall have others in the family imitating his example, and this pestilential heresy will presently infect the whole household. Mary, our august Sovereign, is but a feeble woman; she must die—we know not how soon—and then, should Elizabeth mount the throne, we are lost, unless we can now make our party good. 'Tis not, then, a time for trifling,

we must exterminate these heretics. If this boy will not be taught by me, he must be made to suffer. It would be better that he should even die in his youth, and without repenting of his sins, than that he should be allowed to live and endanger the souls of pious catholics. The Virgin preserve us," he added, suddenly crossing himself, and speaking aloud, "our noble lady and her young daughter are in danger! Heresy creeps in with so much subtilty into silly women's houses, and they seem already to be too much taken with the smooth-faced stripling. I would my Lord were at home." Thus the father, becoming more and more inflamed as he reasoned with himself, went out of the chapel, having taken the resolution of going forthwith to the monastery of St. Cuthbert to consult his spiritual superior —viz. the holy abbot.

The monastery of St. Cuthbert was situated within a short distance of the castle of the Lord

de Courcy. It had been founded by an ancestor of that family, in consequence of a vow made in Palestine, whither he had accompanied the gallant Cœur de Lion ; and its Gothic towers might have remained to this day, had they not been destroyed soon after the period in which the unfortunate Mary Stuart was supposed to have attempted the life of Elizabeth.

I do not now intend to enlarge upon what passed between the monk and the abbot, or what plans they determined upon in order to make the young Edwin a convert to their faith, and a believer in their artful misapplication of the divine types and symbols ; suffice it to say, that they both agreed that, should the boy be found obstinate, he must necessarily be delivered up to the ecclesiastical authorities. “ And do not, my son,” added the abbot, “ do not allow sinful motives of compassion to induce you to implicate the interests of holy mother church by sparing

the feelings of a weak woman, for such is the Lady de Courcy, and a whining babe, such as is her daughter. Know you not our motto, 'That the end sanctifies the means'? The boy, you say, is the son of her who was harboured in the lodge in the centre of the park—the woman they called Elspeth—her whom they so marvellously moved out of the way when they heard that our holy brotherhood were busy in looking up the heretics. Be assured, son, but that the blood of them is tainted with damnable doctrines, and, if you succeed in rooting out this limb of abominable heresy from the household of the Lord de Courcy, you will not go unrewarded either in this life or the next."

Father Ambrose listened to the speech with eyes meekly resting on the ground; and, when the abbot ceased to speak, he knelt to receive a blessing, which was bestowed with all due ceremony by the superior: after which the abbot

added these words :—“ My son, this I foresee will be a work by which much honour will accrue to thee ; thou art about to fight the good fight of faith, and there is a crown laid up for thee hereafter, to be the reward of thy good works.”

The superior then solemnly pronounced the *pax vobiscum* ; and as he stood at the door of his library, he marked with pleasure the determined step of the father, as he was hastening away along the passage which led to the outer gate of the monastery. “ It will do,” he muttered to himself, as he turned back into his apartment ; “ and holy mother church will be benefited in more ways than one ; yet I am as well pleased that honest Ambrose knows not all that I do. If this boy lives, and continues to win so on the affection of Lady de Courcy, I would not give much for what St. Cuthbert will be the better for the broad lands of De Lacy, when this now-whimpering child is a gallant youth ; at all events he

will be better out of the way; and if good Ambrose lights the pile, no blame can fall on me." So saying, he threw himself on his leathern chair, at the same time sounding a little silver bell, which was set by him on his table, to give notice to those without that my lord abbot was inclined to sup.

I would not willingly change place with that man, however sumptuously he might fare every day, who could sleep as quietly that night as the Abbot of St. Cuthbert's did, after having planned, as he had done, before he went to supper, the destruction of an unoffending boy, merely on account of worldly pelf.

In the meantime, whilst the abbot was regaling himself, Father Ambrose had returned to the castle; and, as soon as he had breakfasted the next morning, he sent for Edwin, resolving, if possible, to catch him in his discourse; for, under his assumed character of his spiritual

guide, he set himself, without excuse or apology, to question him closely concerning his faith.

“Master Page,” said he, as soon as the boy stood before him, “I hear strange things of you; they tell me you have no more heed to the concerns of your soul than if you were a brute that perisheth. Tell me, my son, do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?—dost thou think that he left the realms above to die for sinful mortals on earth?”

“I do believe, father,” said the boy.

“Is it sufficient to have faith, in order to be saved?” demanded the monk.

“Yes, by faith alone, I believe, we can be saved,” replied Edwin.

“Have you not heard,” returned the monk, “that faith, without works, is dead? God has protested that he will not give the kingdom of heaven but to those who have merited it by their good works.”

“But has not Christ said,” replied Edwin,

“that, after having done everything, we are unprofitable servants? How, then, can we merit anything by our good works?”

“This is heresy,” said the monk, “and opens the door to every kind of abomination; for our holy church informs us, that God is so good a master, that he has condescended to promise that, if we serve him faithfully, he will repay our services with an eternal reward.”

The boy made no answer to this, and the father went on—

“How could a sinful child like you dare to appear before God without confessing your sins, or without praying to the holy Virgin, the blessed mother of our Lord, to intercede for you? God is infinitely holy—he cannot look upon sin; and the sin in which you live is not light and venial, but it is mortal, it is damnable—it consists in despising the church, and setting at naught the sacraments enjoined thereby.”

The boy made no answer, though the father paused, to give him space so to do.

“ Young man,” said the father angrily, “ do you believe that you can receive salvation without the grace of God ?”

“ Father, I do not,” replied Edwin.

“ Why, then, do you despise the sacraments ?” asked the priest; “ know you not that all the sacraments confer this grace ? Either you do not believe yourself to be a sinner, or else you are wickedly daring to appear before God, with all your sins upon your head, rejecting the proffered assistance of our tender mother church, and presuming to stand forth on your own merits.”

“ Not so, my father,” said Edwin; “ I know myself to be a sinner; yet I also know that my sins are pardoned, through Christ our Lord, who has died for me. I believe in the Father, because he has revealed the Son to me, and also revealed himself to me, through the Son. I believe in the

Son, because I feel within myself that he has justified me with his blood shed for me ; and I believe in the Lord the Spirit, because he has given me a new heart, even the heart of a son, whereby I am enabled to love, and to trust, and to rejoice, and to say, that nothing will ever be able to separate me from him who has redeemed me."

" Do you mean to say, then," continued the monk, " impious and presumptuous as you are, that you will be able to stand before the judgment-seat of God, resting entirely on justification through the merits of Christ ?"

" Yes," replied Edwin ; " and I shall stand, I shall not fall ; for thus I find it written—‘ Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant ? to his own master he standeth or falleth—yea, he shall be holden up—for God is able to make him stand.’" Rom. xiv. 4.

" Impious blasphemer ! do you teach me ?"

said the father; “ you do but wrest Scripture to your own purpose ; whose servant are you but the evil one’s ?—Hear what will be said to such as you in the last day—‘ Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in ; naked, and ye clothed me not ; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.’ How could you, I repeat, laden with original, actual, mortal, and venial sins, as you are, without ever having received either the sacraments of baptism, of confirmation, of penitence, or of extreme unction—without possessing a single ground of merit, prayer, fasting, or holy living, present yourself before the throne of God, having rejected the mediation of the mother of our Lord, and denied the authority of God’s vicegerent upon earth. No ! no ! unhappy one, be persuaded to repent before it is too late.

Look on this holy symbol which I hold before you. Humble yourself before it, as all the saints and holy men and women have done in the long ages before you, and submit to the ordinances of holy mother church : then shall your sins be forgiven you. Yes, I repeat, your sins shall be forgiven you."

" I will pray to my Saviour, if that is what you wish me to do," Edwin replied, " but not before that golden cross."

" And why not before this holy cross ?" inquired the father.

" Because," answered Edwin, " 'Thou shalt not make any graven image, or the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth ; thou shalt not bow down to them, and serve them.' "

" But I do not ask you to worship or serve any graven image," said the monk. " I only ask you to bow before this symbol whilst you repeat certain prayers after me."

“ I cannot, Father Ambrose,” replied the boy ; “ indeed I cannot,—the Bible forbids it ; and I must not sin even if it is to please those who are set in authority over me.”

The father smiled, but it was in malice ; then, instantly composing his features, he added sternly, “ Then you are determined not to bow before the cross, nor to ask the intercession of the holy Virgin ? You must abide the consequences then — you stand in your own strength, and at your own peril.”

“ Not in my own strength, but in the strength of Christ, the Lord, our Redeemer,” he replied.

“ Be it so,” said the Father. “ And now retire to your apartment, and see no one till I send for you—particularly the Lady Alicia. You are not to converse with her. You will destroy her body and soul with your heretical notions.”

Edwin obeyed without speaking, and hastened to the little apartment which had been assigned

to him from his first coming to the castle. It was a very small room, but just large enough to contain his couch and the other articles necessary for his use. The window was placed too high for Edwin to derive much amusement from it. It looked out, however, on the leads within the battlements of the castle ; and occasionally the voices of those passing along would reach him as he sat with his Bible on his knee—first reading, then praying to be guided in the right way. He had remained in his apartment for some hours, and the shadows of the evening sun were reflecting a brilliant light across the floor, when he heard a step in the passage, and the next moment the door was opened quietly, and the little Lady Alicia stood before him, her lovely countenance glowing with a variety of feelings. “ I am so glad, so very glad, to see you again, dear Edwin,” she said. “ They would not let me come before ; but I have heard much about you ; for that cruel

Father Ambrose has been angry with my mother on your account. The father says that you are a heretic, and do not believe in the holy Virgin." Here the little lady stopped to gain breath, at the same time devoutly crossing herself. "Father Ambrose says horrid things about you, Edwin," she continued. "He says that you must be punished, oh! so dreadfully, I cannot bear to think of it; but he also told us that if you would only kiss the cross, and publicly own yourself wrong, he would forgive you. And now, beloved Edwin, my pretty page," added the little lady, bursting into tears, and throwing herself on her knees beside him, "Alicia begs, entreats you to confess yourself in fault; let me run and tell the father that you will do as he wishes. Give me but the least sign that you grant my petition, and I will fly with the message." And she rose hastily, and was already at the door before Edwin had overtaken her. He drew her, however, gently

back into the apartment, and, placing himself respectfully before her, he said, “ Dearest Lady, it cannot be—I cannot kiss that cross—I cannot disobey my God. Even if they should separate me from you, my only friend, my gentle lady and mistress.” Alicia’s tears again flowed, and, forgetting for the moment the distance which ought to be between the lady and her page, and remembering only how they had lived together in infancy, she rested her head, in her agony of grief, on the shoulder of her foster-brother, and thus addressed him :—

“ They forbade me to see you—they forbade my coming here ; but I did not care for them. I was determined to see you, Edwin. I thought,” she added, her voice softening as she proceeded, “ I thought you loved me, and that I should be able to persuade you, for my sake—for little Alicia’s sake—to do as they would have you. And my *gouvernante* also loves you, dear Edwin ; she has

been weeping for you, and I persuaded her at last to let me come to see you. But I must leave you soon."

"And must you go, my only comforter, my only friend?" said Edwin, taking his cousin's little hand within his; "and must we be parted? Oh! my mother!—my mother!" he added, raising his eyes to heaven, "why did you leave your children? Why could you not have lived to protect us? But, alas! what could you have done?" Then, suddenly recollecting himself, he turned again to the weeping little one beside him—"Will you promise me one thing, dearest lady?" he inquired eagerly.

"Anything—everything you wish," she replied.

"Should they take me from this castle, and should I never see my own Alicia again, will you," said he, "read my Bible, for your foster-brother's sake? I shall not want it again, if I leave this room," he added, a mournful foreboding

of the future coming across his mind. "I will hide it under a recess of the wainscot, just in the place I now shew you; and then, when I am gone, will you come and take it from its place? You must read it then, for poor Edwin's sake. Will you not, dearest lady?"

"I will, I will," sobbed the affectionate child. "But do not talk of going, Edwin. It is not long since you came to the castle, and, oh! how happy, how very happy have we been together."

As she spoke, some one was heard in the passage; but it was only her *gouvernante*, who had been alarmed at her young lady's absence. She had evidently been weeping; and, as she entered, she said to Edwin, in sobbing accents, "You are quite right, dear boy: the Lord will strengthen and support you in the way of holiness; so fear not what men can do unto you." And then, as if praying for the blessing of Heaven to descend upon the young page, she

laid her hand affectionately on his head. "Oh ! that it was permitted to me," she exclaimed mournfully, "to save this tender flower, and suffer in his stead ; but it cannot be—the will of the Lord be done." Then, taking her young charge by the hand, she advised her to take leave of the noble boy, adding, that it would most likely only increase the displeasure of his enemies if they found them together. But, as the *gouvernante* retreated towards the door, she was startled by the shadow of a figure at the end of the long passage, by which the turret chamber was connected with the rest of the castle. It was Father Ambrose himself. He seemed much annoyed at finding any one with his victim ; nevertheless, he said nothing.

The Lady Alicia was the favourite child of his patron, and he, no doubt, thought it would not be expedient to offend her without some just cause ; he, therefore, contented himself with say-

ing, as the ladies passed him, “ Daughters, retire to your apartment, and leave me to contend with this young offender; fear not but that I shall bring him to reason.” He was obeyed in silence, for neither of them could speak from sorrow.

The father then entered Edwin’s little chamber, and haughtily demanded if he still persisted in unbelief of the mediating power of the holy Virgin, and other articles of mother church?

“ The Scriptures forbid such a belief,” meekly replied the boy.

“ And how do you know that the Scriptures forbid it?” hastily inquired the father.

“ I have read them,” answered Edwin, in a low voice.

“ Where, and when?” demanded the friar.

“ In my mother’s cottage, near the Cotswold Hills,” said the boy, hardly knowing whether he was right or wrong in thus prevaricating with the father.

The cottage of which he was speaking he knew had been deserted, even by old Catharine, ever since his mother's death ; and he had moreover heard that it was falling fast to decay. He trusted, therefore, that no one would think it worth while to search for a book in a place so desolate ; besides, such an idea might, he thought, take away all suspicion of his having heard the Bible read when living with his mother under the protection of the Lord de Courcy ; and then the noble lady of the castle could not be implicated in the affair. All these thoughts passed across his mind in a moment ; and it seemed to have the desired effect on the monk, for he asked the boy many questions respecting his mother, and how they had spent their time when living on the Cotswold Hills. At length the father appeared to have learnt all he wished to know ; and, taking up a lamp which he had brought with him, he walked out of the room, fastening the door

behind ; and, in a few minutes, Edwin was aware that a sentinel was placed before it, on purpose to watch that no one came near him. Edwin now perceived also, for the first time, that the father had brought some bread and water with him ; and the boy, having returned thanks to his Heavenly Father for his assistance, took the refreshment cheerfully, and then, throwing himself on his pallet, he soon fell asleep.

For many days Edwin was left to himself, with no other companion than his Bible, that holy book which had been the principal comfort of his mother during many, many hours of sorrow ; and the young boy read and learnt many passages from that sacred book. "They will take me from the castle," he said to himself ; " I am almost sure they will ; and I must leave my book for my little lady,—she must have it when I am gone. My own Alicia," he added, " she never had such a kind mother as I have had to teach

her what was right ; but God can make up this deficiency to her."

Edwin had remained in his room for more than a week, when, one day, he saw a small roll of silks placed beside his usual food, which his guard regularly brought once a day. The page examined the cloth, and he could just trace imperfectly, worked in coloured threads, these few words :—

" My father will soon return, and I will entreat him for you. A. C."

Edwin knew very well that the Lord de Courcy had been to Spain with the husband of the English Queen, and had also taken with him his two sons. He now supposed that something had suddenly recalled him to England ; but the poor boy, though much pleased by receiving this small token of his little lady's affectionate regards, felt that even the presence of his lord would not tend to his release. He had heard the Baron de

Courcy mentioned as a stern man, strongly bigoted to popery ; and he trembled when he thought of his gentle Alicia falling under her father's displeasure on his account. Accordingly, the next day, when the sentinel appeared as usual, Edwin asked him if he would convey a few lines from him to the kind friend from whom he had brought a remembrance the day before ; but the man professed ignorance, and even went so far as to deny any knowledge of having brought any thing more than bread and water to the prisoner. Edwin could not persuade him to convey any note or message for him ; nor could he ascertain what were the feelings of this his keeper towards him.

After this, many days passed—the sun arose and set, and Edwin had ceased to count the silent and never-varying hours ; yet the poor captive was not miserable in measure as earthly hope seemed to die away. Those things which are eternal and invisible, and which are apprehended

by faith, manifested themselves more distinctly to his young mind. He saw all that his God had done for the redemption of the world, and for himself especially, more and more clearly from one hour to another ; and, as he read his Bible, what glory was shed on passages which had hitherto been totally dark and hidden to him ; and the more he read, the more he understood of the goodness of God, and the nothingness of man. Thus was he in mercy strengthened and prepared for that which was to follow.

One evening, being seated near his window, he heard the voices of persons standing on the leads just beneath it ; and what they said interested him not a little.

“ So our lord does not return so soon as was expected,” said the first speaker. “ The money which was extorted from the poor subjects of England is not yet expended, I reckon ; and our lord, I suppose, will see it all gone before he

returns to the doting queen for a fresh supply. I wonder whether Queen Mary will stop the sale of our English kerseys again, for a few months, to get fresh subsidies for his foreign Majesty ? or, whether the good old English nobleman must come down a bit, and give us, poor servants, less of the filthy lucre, that his Mightiness may revel it away with his hateful Spaniards?"

" Hush ! Philip," said another voice, in a much lower tone ; " you always speak out your mind so openly, that I would scarce give a groat for your head ; but, for my part, I wish that my lord would hasten back, if it were only for that poor boy's sake, whom they have fastened up there to please the father ; but my mind misgave me, Philip, when we brought him, poor innocent lamb, from his mother's arms, that he would assist to feed the fires at Smithfield. I am but an ignorant man myself, and I cannot say what may be right ; but I only know it makes one's blood

run cold to hear the horrid stories they tell of creatures like ourselves being butchered and tormented for mere matters of opinion: for, allowing, Philip, that the Protestants are wrong, do they expect to mend them by exercising such horrible cruelties? I could say a great deal; but what signifies talking? Do they think of making others Christians by proving that they have no Christianity themselves?"

"Is there no such thing, Godfrey," replied Philip, "as doing something?"

But Edwin could hear no more, for the speakers had passed on. "And so I am doomed to suffer by the hand of violence, as my father did before me," thought Edwin, whilst the tears, unbidden, poured from his eyes; "and yet I thought it would be so." Then, having wept awhile, he fell on his knees, and exclaimed aloud, "Great and merciful Father, I thank thee that thou hast found me worthy to suffer for thy sake.

Oh, my God!" he added, "now, and now for the first time, do I see my sin in repining at my beloved mother's happiness. She was not to see her only son, her darling child, perish before her eyes, and yet not be able to save him, or to suffer in his stead. But, oh! Holy Spirit! Divine Comforter! be thou with thy chosen one in the hour of trial! Yet why do I fear that thou wilt forsake me, for hast thou not said, 'As thy day, so shall thy strength be: for I will never leave thee comfortless or forsake thee'? I know, oh! my God! I am a poor, weak, sinful child; but thou art great and powerful, and I shall be made to come off more than conqueror, through Him that loved me. Bless, oh, my Saviour! bless my little Alicia—my gentle foster-sister! She will never forget her Edwin; nor do I doubt but that she will be taught of God, and led by the Divine hand, as I have been, till we meet in the presence of our blessed Saviour."

Such was the tenor of Edwin's prayer ; and in measure as he was led to commune with his God, a sort of miraculous unapprehensiveness, as it regarded present things, was imparted to his soul ; whilst the things of another life were exhibited to his imagination with a glory and a brightness which is never experienced by even the most devoted children of God when walking in the paths of prosperity.

Having risen from his knees, he had climbed to the little grated window, from whence, in the bright moonbeam, the whole extent of the park was seen ; and the pool, near which he had been reared, glistening among the trees, and the long line of the Cotswold resting on the horizon ; and on these fair forms of nature he gazed long, thinking of his early days, and of his mother's death ; and, tracing in memory his path through life unto the present hour, of which each circumstance seemed more and more to prove to him how

his Almighty Father had loved him, and preserved him from the many temptations which try those who walk in the broad sunshine of prosperity. Thus, in thoughts like these, passed the hours, till the captive boy was constrained to seek his peaceful pillow, where I shall leave him, to speak of Father Ambrose.

After conversing with Edwin, he sought the Lady de Courcy, and there expressed himself with so much violence against the young heretic, as he called him, that, in her terror, she acknowledged his birth and parentage. The father was startled, and would have been glad had he not begun so dangerous a contest; however, he concealed his dismay, and only replied, as Gardiner had done before him, when speaking of the amiable Catharine Parr, "The more elevated the person who was chastised, the greater would be the effect of the example, and the more glorious would the sacrifice appear in the eyes of

posteriority." Still, though he put so good a face on the matter, he was not easy when he found that it was not a simple page, but a cousin of his lady's, whom he had dealt thus roughly by; and such, indeed, was his uneasiness, that he repaired again the next morning to St. Cuthbert's, to explain his fears to the abbot.

That wily churchman, however, was not in a mood to give way to his fears, and soon led him to understand that, having once set his hand to the plough, he would draw all the thunders of the church on his head if he shewed a cowardly spirit, and left his work unfinished.

"The boy," exclaimed the abbot, "shall either renounce his heresies, or he shall experience the utmost vengeance of mother church; and if you, my son, are the blessed instrument of the ecclesiastical justice, I promise you a nobler patroness, in that excellent lady and mistress who

now rules in this kingdom, than you will lose in the wife of Lord de Courcy."

The father hinted that, as the Lord de Courcy had much influence with the queen's husband (viz., Philip of Spain), he might, perchance, by offending the Lady de Courcy, induce her lord to do him an ill turn with the king.

"Be it so," returned the abbot; "it shall not hurt you; and here is my hand upon it. I have interest with the cardinal-legate, and I promise you that your services shall be remembered. Be faithful to the interests of the church, and your reward shall be assured to you."

The father bowed, with assumed humility; nevertheless a smile lurked in the corners of his mouth; and all scruples being thus removed, there was nothing else to be concerted with the abbot than how that might best be done which they had resolved should be accomplished. The father was aware that, had he told his whole plans to

the Lady de Courcy, she would have protected the child at every risk ; he therefore, on his return from St. Cuthbert's, stated his intentions to be simply these :—that he would remove the boy to the protection of his monastery, where he might receive instruction in the doctrines of the true faith, and be prevented from spreading his heresy among other members of the household. To this plan the lady could make no objection, especially as she was far from suspecting the real intentions of the monk. Nevertheless, the father fearing that suspicions might arise in her mind, waited only till the dawn of the next morning to remove the boy. Edwin was still asleep, when the father abruptly entered his room. He had sunk to repose the night before with his Bible in his hand ; and that blessed book was still on his couch when he was summoned to rise and dress in haste.

Being ready, the father committed him to the

charge of two inferior monks of St. Cuthbert, who were waiting in the gallery ; by these he was to be conducted, first to the monastery, and from thence secretly to London, to await, in confinement, that terrible sentence already prepared for him.

As the persecuted boy passed away out of sight between the two monastic functionaries, the father remained in the apartment from which the captive had been so lately torn ; and, looking round him, his eye fell on the volume of the sacred book, which lay unclasped upon the couch.

“ Ah !” exclaimed the father, as his fiery eye rested upon it ; “ Ah ! art thou there, thou interdicted witness of foul heresy ? I have thee now, son of De Lacy ; thy death-warrant is sealed ;” and a flush of deadly joy spread itself over his gaunt features. So saying, he took up the volume, and was thrusting it into his bosom, when suddenly his arm was arrested by the dimpled hand of the

Lady Alicia, who seemed to be beside herself with grief and anger.

“Where, cruel man,” she exclaimed, “where are they taking my gentle page? Did I not see him pass away across the court with those two monks?—did I not see him from my window, and did he not turn and look up to where he might behold me for the last time? Oh! barbarous—where is he gone? Must I never see my pretty page again—my own foster-brother?” and she wrung her hands, and the tears fell in large drops upon her silken robe.

The father tried to soothe her, by telling her that Edwin was only gone to school at the monastery, and that he would come back when he had learned such things as were needful to make him a good catholic and an accomplished page.

Alicia heard him throughout in silence, and then suddenly looking up, whilst her deep blue

eyes, generally so soft and gentle, and so baby-like in their expression, flashed with an intelligence which caused the hypocrite to shrink beneath his cowl; and, as if she scorned to reason with him—"Father," she said, "I know what you are about; and now," she added, "give me that book—it was Edwin's;" and she laid her hand upon it—"he loved it dearly—he gave it me; and, when I have it, go and tell of me that I read the Bible, and that I am a protestant, and let them do with me as they will do with my gentle page. I do not care—it will only be a little suffering, and then we shall be happy."

The priest was amazed—he knew not what to think, and he suffered the child to take the book, before he could make up his mind how to act as it regarded her; nor could he resolve, till he saw her running from him along the passage. He watched her light figure till the windings of the gallery hid her from his sight, and then burst into

loud and bitter anathemas against the pestilential heresy which, like the heads of the fabled dragon, multiplied in being cut off. "But," continued he, "this house can henceforward, I see, afford me no protection—mother and daughter will now detest me. I will away to St. Cuthbert's, and thence to London; and, under the patronage of my lord abbot, (for hath he not promised me his favour, if I succeed in annihilating this boy?) I shall mount the ladder; and who knows but that an abbot's mitre may, at some future time, encircle this brow?" So saying, the monk shook his feet, as if to clear them of the dust of the castle, and proceeded, with long strides, to the monastery.

In a few hours after this, Father Ambrose, with certain other ecclesiastical officials, was on his road to London with poor Edwin; where, being arrived, the captive was consigned to the Tower—the knowledge of his noble birth having somehow transpired, but not through the Abbot of St.

Cuthbert's—that Tower from whence the persecuted Elizabeth had lately so narrowly escaped being led to the scaffold.

And there Edwin was left to himself, without any amusement or employment of any kind, his Bible having been left behind him; so that he had no other resource than to repeat to himself those verses which he had learnt by heart, when he still possessed that precious book. The poor boy often wept, when he thought of his mother and Lady Alicia, the only beings, with the exception of old Bertrand, who had ever drawn forth his young affections; and he now looked forward, almost with pleasure, to any death which would unite him again to two of those dear ones—the other, he felt persuaded that he should never see again in this world. At length the day of the trial arrived, and the noble boy was taken before the merciless Bonner, to be examined upon the charge of heresy.

The hardened and desperate Gardiner, Lord High Chancellor of England, had long been uneasy, at the bloody work of murder which he had taken on himself, and he had therefore named Bonner, Bishop of London—a man of profligate manners and of a brutal character—to act for him on these dreadful occasions. Already the blood of more than two hundred protestants cried out for vengeance, but still the wretched Bonner rejoiced in the torments of the sufferers, having been known, with his own hand, to have whipped some of those meek ones who persevered in the truth, until he himself was exhausted with the violence of the exercise. Is it, then, to be wondered at, when the beautiful boy was placed before him, dressed in the deepest mourning, as was the general custom on those occasions, his fair hair falling in rich curls over his neck and shoulders, and partially concealing his sweet pale face, that this infamous man felt

no pity for his youth, nor was touched by that beauty of holiness and harmlessness so conspicuous in his appearance? No; rather than it should be spared, he would have lit the flame himself, which was to consume that fine form and turn it into the dust from whence it came.

The gentle Edwin was accordingly accused of heresy before this cruel tribunal. Father Ambrose, who was present at the trial, declared that a Bible had been found in his possession, many parts of which appeared to have been well studied. "The boy also," he said, "refused to pray to the holy Virgin, or to bend his knee before the sacred cross."

There was no one present to comfort the accused on this occasion—no mother or sister's look of compassion, to shed a beam of hope on his sad, sad mind. Where was his mother, or that lovely one, who had been as a sweet sister to him? Where were they gone, and why was

there none near to help him ? But no—our Edwin wanted not human help—he stood unmoved before his merciless judge—his fair head drooping on his breast—his heart being lifted in prayer to heaven ; nor did he raise his eyes to look at his accusers, till the haughty Bonner demanded, peremptorily, if what the holy father had said concerning him were correct ? adding, that any one of these charges was sufficient, according to the laws of her blessed catholic Majesty, the Lady Mary, to ensure his condemnation.

“ How would you like to feel the flame, child ? ” continued this brutal bigot ; “ would you be as determined in your obstinacy as him whom I made to try the fire beforehand ? Yes,” he added, with a brutish laugh, “ I held his finger in the flames myself, that I might give him a specimen of burning, till his sinews and veins shrunk and burst.”

He then added other taunts, so low and so

degrading to his office, that I, as the recorder of these events, refuse to set them down. Suffice it to say, then, that those who stood about him were ashamed of him, and were glad when, returning to the solemn business of the day, he put the question—"Is, or is not, what the father says of you correct, young man?"

"It is correct," replied Edwin, meekly.

"And you have had a Bible in your possession?"

"I have, my lord," replied the boy.

"What more is needed?" exclaimed Bonner, exultingly: "the boy condemns himself. Guards, to the Tower with him again! I will speak concerning him with my reverend brother—we will see if that sullen spirit of his will bear him through the flames."

As Edwin was removed by the guards, he could still overhear a little of what passed between the Bishop of London and his com-

paratively poor brother, the monk Ambrose, but that little was sufficient to convince him that, from this mock trial, his fate was sealed, as far as human authority could decide it. There were still, however, many persons to be examined that day on the charge of heresy by the wretched Bonner; and the unfeeling judge would not, as he declared, waste time on one concern, whilst there were so many other affairs of the same kind to be expedited. Thus Edwin was remanded to the Tower; and, in the meantime, the public attention was called to other matters.

The strong Castle of St. Agatha, belonging to the English, at Calais, had been assaulted by the French troops, under the command of the Duke of Guise; and Lord Wentworth, the English governor, after a brave defence, was obliged to surrender it to the enemy. The news of this defeat had already reached England, and the miserable Queen herself was so much affected at the loss, as

to declare that, when dead, the name of Calais would be found engraven on her heart. The complicated unhappiness which she then had to endure, from a disdainful husband, an unsuccessful war, a murmuring people, and an increasing heresy, all together preyed upon her mind, and threw her into a lingering fever. It was owing to these circumstances that the ambitious Bonner, with others of this description, felt that their day would soon be over, and that they determined, therefore, to hasten the execution of those unfortunate beings who had been already condemned ; and, amongst others, none was of more consequence than the amiable Edwin, whose vast inheritance had been given to the church ; and Bonner was fully aware that, if the boy lived, there was a greater chance that they would be demanded, if ever the protestant cause should in any degree recover its influence.

According to all notions of policy, it would

have been better if the Roman catholic party, in anticipating the death of Mary, had relaxed their severity ; but the fiery zeal with which they were actuated, seemed to have left no room for prudence ; but, inasmuch as they anticipated a short reign, their malice became hotter. The Abbot of St. Cuthbert, too, being come to London, secretly urged Bonner to finish the work which had been begun with the young De Lacy ; and the popish emissaries from abroad, also, urged on the task of extermination.

Accordingly, at noon, on the 17th of November, 1558, the gentle Edwin was taken from the Tower, to meet an early and a dreadful death, for the sake of his religion ; being called to this trial by the will of his heavenly Father, who also, with the temptation, gave him the power to resist. The beautiful boy was attired in a sable dress, according to the established custom, and attended by two officials, who also were dressed in black ;

and thus he was led to the stake. Edwin himself could give no other account of his feelings at that time, than that he was as one in a dream—a terrible dream, indeed, but one that would be presently over. He was to suffer at Smithfield, where the pious Rogers, prebendary of St. Paul's, had died before him, for the witness of Jesus. The last words of this venerable man, which had been told to Edwin, still rung in his ears—“ I resign my life with joy, in testimony of the doctrine of Christ.” And, as Edwin repeated them to himself, the question occurred to him—if he were enabled to meet the flames with joy, why, then, should I be afraid ?

It would be difficult, in these times, to bring the aspect of Smithfield before the eyes of my reader ; but why it has been called Smithfield no one can tell. It was anciently a large and open field, in which a priory was afterwards founded ; still a part of it was open in the time of Mary,

being covered with elms, from whence it was called "The Elms." A stone marks the spot where generally these cruel exhibitions were manifested. A pile of wood had been already prepared, and a stake, to which the victim was to be attached. When Edwin arrived, an immense concourse of people were assembled, the greater part of whom were secretly detesting the authors of this cruelty, yet, under such fear for their lives, that no one dared to be the first to betray this abhorrence. Being arrived at Smithfield, the youthful victim was led, between two officials, into the great church of the priory; where he was compelled, by order of Bonner, to stand and hear the mass; after which he was brought out, accompanied by a long procession of monks, (amongst whom was Father Ambrose,) to the place of execution. It was whilst they were preparing to tie him to the stake, that Father Ambrose presented him with the queen's pardon, in

case he would make a recantation (a form which had lately been neglected), but the boy shook his head, and replied, in a firm voice, that, with the assistance he felt was prepared for him from above, he knew he should be supported through this trying hour. Then raising his voice with almost a supernatural power, his fine countenance glowing with animation, he exclaimed, "I die, trusting alone in the merits of my Redeemer; in him I already live, and, although my sins be as scarlet, yet has he made them white as wool."

As he spoke, a general murmur rose amongst the crowd, and some of the women cried, "Save this beautiful boy! Cowards ye are, to torture such a child."

"Burn the heretic! burn the heretic! the accursed heretic!" cried the loud voices of certain bigoted papists, purposely stationed near the stake; "burn him, we say; light the fire, or else we will shorten his life by other means,

for those who dare to oppose the authority of holy mother church shall not live ;" and, as they spoke, they advanced their halberts, as if with the object of destroying, by their means, the young life of the condemned child. Father Ambrose also whispered to the officials to be brief, fearing that the youth of the condemned might excite the compassion of the populace, and retard the work, for which he expected a high reward, till the day of the papists should have expired ; for it had come to his ears that the life of the queen was already as a lamp flickering in the socket ; but he had letters of recommendation to the court of Rome, of which he waited only the boy's execution to hasten the presentation. But even this wily monk might have shrunk from the business he had in hand, had he been aware how very near its close was the reign of popery in this realm, and how soon the sceptre was to be transferred to another hand.

In the meantime, whilst the uproar made by the two parties occasioned some delay in the proceedings of those immediately connected with the boy's martyrdom, and the horrid oaths and execrations still rang in his ears, with "Burn the heretic! the accursed heretic!" Edwin alone, of all present at that dreadful scene, was calm, and he felt his mind almost miraculously raised above, to that heavenly glory into which he was so soon to enter. It seemed as if the bitterness of death had already passed with him, according to the assurance of our Lord, who said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death;" John, viii. 52.

At length the voice of authority silenced the multitude, and a stillness as hushed as death ensued; during which the officials, with noiseless steps, glided towards the boy, and were preparing to tie the youthful martyr to the stake, when suddenly the deep-toned sound of the passing bell

of Westminster was heard sweeping along the streets deserted by the populace. This passing bell was immediately answered from other steeples—it was an awful warning, and many looked with fear one upon another, but none inquired the cause of those portentous sounds; only Father Ambrose again desired them to hasten their preparations; but before the words were scarcely out of his mouth, the crowd within the field suddenly gave way, as if to assist the approach of some persons towards the stake; for, as we mentioned before, the hearts of many present were for the noble boy; and a minute afterwards a fairy form, attired in white, was seen to ascend the steps to the stake, and in a moment the Lady Alicia had thrown herself into Edwin's supporting arms, nearly unconscious of what was passing.

“He is alive—still alive,” she exclaimed wildly; “my Edwin is still alive—they have

not yet dared to murder him—my own Edwin—my beloved brother. I will not let them take you from me,” she added passionately; “you are, and shall be free.” But whilst she spoke the father advanced, and tried to disengage the child from Edwin’s arms.

“Lady Alicia,” he said calmly, “this is not a fit place for a high-born maiden like yourself. As your spiritual adviser, I command you to retire.”

“Wretched, wicked man,” she exclaimed, turning towards the father, but still holding firmly to Edwin—“wretched, wicked man, how dare you sin thus before God? It is not for his religion alone that you and the Abbot of St. Cuthbert persecute my brother. No! no!” she added vehemently, “my Edwin should have an inheritance—a rich inheritance, and that is the cause, the chief cause of your cruelty.” Then drawing down Edwin with her, she knelt before the monk, and, in a

supplicating manner, entreated him to save her Edwin, if it were only for a few minutes, a few short minutes. "You know," she continued, "dear father, you know that I shall be my mother's only heiress; all my estates, all that will ever be mine, I here promise to give to you, to the church, if you will but save his life—his precious life, but a few short hours—I do not ask for more."

"It cannot be," exclaimed the father, authoritatively; "I have not the power to save him; the boy has sinned, and our church has declared him guilty. Again, I say to you, lady, retire; this is not a fit place for the daughter of our noble Lord de Courcy wherein to remain."

"I will not leave Edwin," she replied, again clinging to her foster-brother; "I will not leave him—I will be bound with him to the stake. We were nursed together, and we will die together. And now," she added, holding out her dimpled hand, "bind this arm with his—death itself shall

not part us. I know that his religion is right, and yours is wrong; and the same blessed Saviour who strengthened him will also strengthen me. Once and again, I will die with Edwin—we never will be parted."

"Alicia, dearest Alicia," said Edwin, imploringly, and trying gently to disengage himself from the affectionate and courageous little girl; "you must go—you must leave me. I cannot, indeed, —indeed, I cannot see you suffer. Oh! it would be worse than a thousand deaths to me—if I should behold the dreadful flames feeding on that lovely form. No! no! my beloved Alicia—you say that you love me; then go, dearest, for my sake, return to your mother, and forget Edwin." And again he tried to release himself from her grasp.

A burst of feeling arose at this moment from the populace, and an attempt to rush in to a rescue, but the people were kept back by the functionaries of the church.

It seemed that the little lady had come with her mother to London to meet her father, who had been expected to have arrived the day before, but had not yet come; and having discovered, from the tears of her *gouvernante*, the night before, what was to happen the ensuing day, she had persuaded our old friends, Philip and Godfrey, who were both protestants at heart, to conduct her privately to Smithfield, these honest men being willing to run some risk, if it were possible to serve the unhappy child. Whether the *gouvernante* was aware of this measure does not appear, nor how Alicia could have evaded her observation, unless she favoured that evasion, we cannot well understand: these were difficult times, and it is hard to say what persons would risk under such trials; but when Godfrey and Philip saw the extent to which things were going, they became terribly alarmed; and Philip, stepping forwards, said aloud, "This

worthy monk here present," bowing to Father Ambrose, "can vouch for this young lady, that she has been brought up in all the forms of the Roman catholic church, and that she speaks only in passion, when she declares herself to be a protestant."

The little lady, still firmly grasping the hand of Edwin, as she stood side by side with him at the stake, replied, "You are mistaken, Philip: it was before I read that holy book which my Edwin left me, that I began to think that he was right, and that we were wrong. I got many ideas when I was a very little child, which I never told to anybody—I got them from my beloved nurse —my Edwin's mother; and when I read that beautiful book, they were all brought back to my mind; and it was put into my heart that I should not be afraid to die, because Christ, who has died for me, has promised to take away the pains of death. And now I have proved to you that I am

what you call a heretic as much as Edwin, and if you destroy him for his religion, you ought to destroy me also."

She had scarcely ceased to speak, when Philip advanced to lay hold of her, upon which she again threw herself into the arms of Edwin, praying him not to let her go. "Do not let them take me from you, dear Edwin," she said; "oh, say that we shall die together—say it, Edwin!" what more she would have added being lost in a burst of tenderness, in which she was joined by Edwin, who suffered far more from terror, on her account, than from any horror of his own approaching fate. At the same time a burst of universal disapprobation from the multitude, without the circle of the papal functionaries, caused the man who was about to place the lighted torch to the fagot, to start back with a motion so sudden, that the brand was so nearly extinguished as to emit only a thick smoke and sulphurous smell,

which presently dissipated itself in the clear atmosphere. At the same time Philip stepped forward again to seize the little girl by force, and thus to rescue her from the danger in which she had involved herself, blaming himself for having yielded to her entreaties to bring her to this place, for so little purpose ; but before he could remove the child, an agitation, at the remote end of the field, drew the attention of all present. The excitement of multitudes is often compared to the raging of a tempest, or to the distant roaring of winds rising over a wide extent of forest, the murmur being first heard at a distance, like the far-off roll of thunder, increasing from one moment to another, and then bursting on the ear with astounding impetuosity. So it was in the scene before us : loud shouts arose at the edge of the crowd—at first indistinct, but presently audible and clear. The import of these were—“ Away with your fires, accursed heretics ! Hurrah ! Our protestant bre-

thren—hurrah ! Mary is no more—Queen Mary, the papist, is dead. And hurrah again, my men, for Elizabeth, our maiden queen ;” and then a cheer, loud as ever proceeded from a multitude rejoicing in deliverance from a most cruel bondage, rose in the air, spreading itself from Smithfield to all the environs of that field of blood. And when this cheer had been repeated many times, whilst those on and around the pile stood fixed in amazement, as hardly comprehending the scene, the excitement of the multitude suddenly took another turn ; and a woman having exclaimed, “ Where is the man who would have put fire to fagot to destroy these little blessed ones ?—seize him and his employers, and let them all feel the torments they and their brethren have caused so many to suffer,”—the populace came forward ; whilst the same dark spirit of vengeance which had actuated the other party was urging them on to a sudden and bloody vengeance, and

the lives of the monks and inferior functionaries of the church would have been sacrificed, had not Philip and Godfrey, with two or three more persons, who understood the Christian doctrine of forgiveness, favoured their escape to the priory, the gates of which were near, and which they had no sooner entered than they barred and bolted them behind them, and fled to their strongest fastness, to take counsel together concerning what they must do, in case of the actual death of their queen.

In the meantime Alicia and Edwin stood side by side, at the foot of the stake, in a situation elevated above the multitude, the infant hand of Alicia being locked in that of Edwin, and the arm of Edwin being passed round her waist. They were both pale as marble; yet their hearts, by the Divine mercy, were fixed to live or to die in the true faith, as the course of circumstances permitted.

The attempt made by the multitude to seize and destroy their persecutors, had filled these infant witnesses to the truth with fresh dismay ; and when they saw Philip and Godfrey aiding their escape, Alicia burst into tears—the first that she had been enabled to shed ; and, throwing herself on her foster-brother's bosom, had surely fallen on the pile, had he not held her up in his arms.

And thus these babes remained, having been enabled to bear a glorious testimony, in the sight of many witnesses, until Godfrey and Philip came from the rescue of the monks to convey them away to their friends. And thus the Lady Alicia, by the delay which she had occasioned, had, through the Divine mercy, been the means of saving her foster-brother from a terrible death ; and also had herself been honoured, in having been permitted to bear her testimony (though in the lisping accents of a child) to the power of

eternal truth. So, in this instance, as in many others which may be found in the bloody records of those days, was praise made perfect out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

And now we must leave Edwin and Alicia with their kind relations and friends for awhile, and speak of Elizabeth—the great Elizabeth of England. Never was the accession of any sovereign accompanied with more sincere demonstrations of joy than that of Elizabeth. She was at Hatfield when the news of her sister's death reached her, and from thence she hastened immediately to London. Many noblemen, with their wives and families, went forth to meet their sovereign lady, whilst the loud shouts of the multitude welcomed her with universal acclamations of delight. Those who met her turned again, to lead her to the Tower, to enter that place, not as a prisoner, as she once had been, but as the royal mistress of a powerful nation. Here, again, she

received the homage of her subjects, and here the noble Lord de Courcy, (who had returned from Spain when expected,) advancing from amongst the other noblemen, knelt at the feet of his sovereign ; by his side was a graceful and beautiful youth, whose magnificent demeanour manifested his birth. “ My noble Lady and Sovereign,” said the Earl, bowing as he spoke, “ I here do entreat you, with your wonted justice, that you will again invest this boy with the estates of his forefathers : he is the only child and heir of the gallant and unfortunate Theodore de Lacy, and of his countess, the beautiful and amiable Lady Berengaria, whose lady mother was a near relation and much-esteemed friend of your highness’s royal parent, our long-regretted and much-lamented Queen, Anne Boleyn. The boy himself has already been once condemned for his religion, and if he be as constant to his earthly sovereign as he has proved himself, by the Divine

grace, to be to his heavenly one, your majesty will not have to boast of a more faithful servant, throughout your devoted realm, than Edwin de Lacy. The happy commencement of your majesty's glorious reign has terminated, I trust, his trials, with those of many others of your poor subjects ; and it is in your majesty's power alone to permit again those estates and lands to devolve to the lawful heir, which have been held for a time by the monastery of St. Cuthbert's, by permission of your royal sister."

The particulars of Queen Elizabeth's reply is not known, though assuredly they were favourable ; but as she raised the young Lord Edwin de Lacy, she demanded of him whether he would become her page, and wait on her royal person. Such an offer could not be misunderstood, and occasioned such universal expressions of satisfaction, that the happy little Lady Alicia, who was present with her mother, could not remain silent,

but expressed her delight with such signs of innocent joy, as to attract the attention of the maiden queen, who called the beautiful child to her side, and, from that time, as the ancient chroniclers tell us, Edwin and Alicia together shared their sovereign's affection. And, as the Bible so carefully preserved by the lovely little maiden was never taken from her by the original possessor, we have no doubt that the effect of reading that blessed book, on the tender mind of that now happy child, was a Divine work, and that the pious lessons instilled into her young heart by her affectionate nurse caused the blossoms to bring forth the fairest fruits.

And now I must close my story, leaving to the lively imagination of my gentle reader to decide, whether this friendship, begun even in the cradle, between Edwin and his beautiful Alicia, increased as they advanced in years, or whether the Lady Alicia, by her generous forgetfulness of self, to

save the life of her cousin, so lost her hold upon his affections, as to make them as strangers and foreigners to each other the rest of their blessed and peaceful lives.

THE END.







